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ABSTRACT

A study conducted at Louisiana State University was designed to: determine demographic characteristics of master's degree graduates in school administration in order to draw conclusions concerning identifying profiles; ascertain the extent to which the graduates perceived the courses of instruction in their academic preparation as relevant to subsequent educational administrative functions; and to determine which additional courses of instruction not in the present curriculum were perceived as relevant professionally to current educational administrative function. Of the 215 questionnaires mailed to graduates in school administration, 151 usable responses were received. Based upon the findings, the following recommendations are offered: maintain the 12 courses of instruction that compose the school administration curriculum; introduce an elective course involving the study of human relations and possibly including the sociology of education and school discipline; introduce a one-semester, required administrative practicum; and introduce public speaking as an elective course. (SW)

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CHARACTERISTICS OF LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY MASTER'S DEGREE GRADUATES IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR ACADEMIC PREPARATION, 1971-76

Research Report Vol. 7, No. 6 September, 1977

RESEARCH REPORT

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A Summary of an Ed.D. Dissertation

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I. INTRODUCTION

The primary purpose of the Graduate Division of Education, established in the College of Education in 1970, is to provide teachers with opportunities for advanced study and specialization in specific professional areas of education (1:1). Since January 23, 1971, the Department of Education has offered the Master of Education degree and the Certificate of Education Specialist through the Graduate Division of Education.

Through its emphasis upon graduate and professional programs, Louisiana State University (LSU) has strengthened its value to the people of Louisiana (2:13). Various means of program appraisal have been utilized effectively in the past in an effort to improve the academic preparation of students.

This study was made to provide insight regarding the current strengths and weaknesses of the school administration curriculum through the perceptions of selected graduates of the program. The 234 subjects in this follow-up study were the master's degree graduates who majored in school administration and were graduated from the Graduate Division of Education during May, 1971, through May, 1976. (5)

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purposes of this study were: (1) to determine selected demographic characteristics of master's degree graduates in school administration in order to draw conclusions concerning identifying profiles: (2) to ascertain the extent to which the

graduates perceived the courses of instruction in their academic preparation as relevant to subsequent educational administrative functions; and (3) to determine which additional courses of instruction not in the present curriculum were perceived by these graduates as relevant professionally to current educational administrative functions.

METHODOLOGY

Two hundred and thirty-nine questionnaires were mailed to the graduates on November 15, 1976. Nineteen of the graduates could not be located; five were found to have majored in areas other than educational administration. Therefore, questionnaires were mailed to 215 graduates who had majored in school administration. One hundred fifty-three (71%) were returned; one hundred fifty-one (70%) were usable as sources of data for this study.

THE INSTRUMENT

An extensive review of related literature preceded the formulation of the prospectus and the instrument used in the collection of data for this study. Because objectivity was a major concern in regard to the responses of the graduates, a questionnaire format was selected. (4:242-244)

II. PROFILES OF THE RESPONDENTS

The 1976 Spring Semester showed a significant increase in graduates over prior semesters in this five year period. Twenty-three (15%) of the respondents were educational administrators. One hundred eleven (74%) of the respondents were in educational positions other than administration, and seventeen (11%) were no longer in the education profession.

RESPONDENTS IN ADMINISTRATION

The respondents who had become administrators (23) were predominantly male, had a mean age of 37.1, and were residents of Louisiana. Fifty-seven percent (13) held a bachelor of science degree, and 100 percent (23) had received a master of education degree; none of the respondents who had become administrators had earned a doctorate or the Certificate of Education Specialist. The administrative position achieved most often by the respondents was Assistant/Vice Principal of Discipline. Forty-four percent (10) of the respondents were employed in either a public junior high school or a public senior high school, had a mean of 11.5 years experience in education and a mean of 3.5 years of administrative experience.

RESPONDENTS IN OTHER EDUCATIONAL POSITIONS

The respondents reported as employed in educational positions other than administration were predominantly male, had a mean age of 33, and a mean of nine years of experience as an educator. Forty-seven percent (52) of the respondents held a bachelor of science degree, 100 percent (111) had received a

master of education, and 4.5 percent (5) had earned the Certificate of Education Specialist. One hundred eight (97.3%) of the graduates in this classification were employed as classroom teachers. Forty-five percent (50) were employed in public senior high schools, and two percent were located in colleges or universities.

RESPONDENTS NO LONGER IN EDUCATION

Of the respondents who reported having left the profession (17), most were employed in either business or industry. Twelve (70.6%) were male, and the 17 had an average age of 31.4 years and a mean of 5.4 years of experience in education. Nine (52.9%) of the respondents indicated that their primary reason for leaving the profession had been an interest in other careers.

III. PERCEPTIONS OF THE RESPONDENTS REGARDING ACADEMIC PREPARATION

The findings and analysis of data contained in this section pertain to perceptions of the selected graduates in reference to their graduate academic preparation in the Graduate Division of Education at LSU. The results were reported in two parts: perceptions regarding the relevancy of academic preparation to current administrative functions and perceived degrees of emphasis placed upon the components of administrative function. The respondents were classified into four groups, as follows: respondents who became administrators prior to graduation, respondents who have become administrators since graduation, respondents in educational positions other than administration, and respondents no longer in the education profession.

The twelve courses of instruction which comprise the school administration curriculum were grouped into three categories: required courses of instruction, courses which are electives and standard requirements of The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and elective courses for advanced graduate students only.

A five-degree, modified Likert-type scale ranging from "least relevant" (1) to "most relevant" (5) was used by the respondents to record perceived degrees of relevance for each of the twelve courses of instruction. The graduates were requested to measure only the courses which they had taken as a part of their academic preparation at LSU. The author reported the results according to frequency of response, composite scores, and means. The composite scores were obtained by multiplying the perceived rating by the frequency, and the mean was computed using manual calculations.

SUMMARY OF RESPONDENTS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING ACADEMIC PREPARATION

The total perceptions reported according to the four classifications revealed that 143 (94%) of the respondents perceived the School Administration course to be very relevant to current administrative functions (overall mean of 4.0). Forty-five (29.5%) of the respondents perceived Problems of Educational Finance to be very relevant as a standard elective (mean of 4.3), and School Law was perceived to be very relevant by 20 percent (30) of the respondents (mean of 4.3). Of the elective courses for advanced graduate students only, Problems in Curriculum and Instruction had a frequency of 24 (overall mean of

3.6), and Problems in the Organization and Administration of Education had a frequency of 25 (overall mean of 3.6). The respondents in all four classifications perceived School Administration as having the highest degree of relevance of any required course. Problems of Educational Finance was selected by the respondents as being a very relevant standard elective by the two classifications of administrators and by the respondents holding other educational positions; School Law was perceived to be very relevant by the respondents in all four classifications. Of the elective courses open only to advanced graduate students, Problems in Curriculum and Instruction was perceived to be a very relevant elective by the respondents in both classifications of administration and by respondents in other educational positions.

The twelve courses of instruction in the three categories which comprise the school administration curriculum had means ranging from 3.4, the lower limit of the "very relevant" category, to 4.3 at the upper limit. The findings suggested that all twelve courses of the school administration curriculum were perceived to be very relevant by the respondents in reference to current administrative functions of school administrators.

DEGREES OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPONENTS OF ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS

A Pearson Rank-Order Correlation

$$p = 1 - \frac{6\Sigma D^2}{N(N^2-1)}$$

was computed for two overall ranks of perceptions regarding the components of administrative function which did receive the "most" emphasis in each course of instruction as compared

with the components which "should" receive the "most" emphasis.

By testing the significance of "r" the degree of correlation between the two ranks was established. Five degrees of freedom were used, and significance of relationship was accepted at the .01 (.874) and .05 (.754) levels. The seven specific components of administrative function, determined through a review of related literature, were listed as follows: (1) decision making, (2) planning, (3) organizing, (4) communicating, (5) influencing, (6) coordinating, and (7) evaluating. (3:145)

Of the required courses of instruction, The School Principalship in Elementary and Secondary Schools received the highest perceived degree of significance between the two overall ranks at the .96 level. All three required courses of instruction were found to have a significant degree of relationship at the .01 and .05 levels. Educational Facility Planning, School Law, Supervision of Student Teaching, and Problems of Educational Finance were the standard electives found to have a significant degree of relationship between the two overall ranks at the .05 level. Of the courses which are electable by advanced graduate students, Problems in the Organization and Administration of Education, The Curriculum in the Elementary and Secondary Schools, and Theories and Practices in School Administration had significant degrees of relationship between the two overall ranks at the .05 level. Analysis of the data suggested that there was a significant degree of relation-

ship between the components which were most emphasized in each course of instruction and the functional components which perceivably should be most emphasized.

IV. PERCEPTIONS REGARDING RELATED AND SUGGESTED COURSES

Of six related courses of instruction, not in the present curriculum, identified through a review of the literature, Human Relations received the highest perceived overall composite score and mean. Public Speaking also was perceived to be a course of instruction which would be a very relevant addition to the academic preparation of future students in administration. In an open response item of the instrument, those responding in administration and in other educational positions frequently suggested that an Administrative Practicum would be beneficial as a required course of instruction in the academic preparation of future educational administrators. Among other courses mentioned less frequently were the Sociology of Education and School Discipline.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based upon the findings in this study:

1. Maintain the twelve courses of instruction which presently compose the school administration curriculum at this institution of higher learning.
2. Introduce into the curriculum an elective course of instruction involving the study of human relations. Both the sociology of education and school discipline appear to be topics which could possibly be included in this course.
3. Introduce to the curriculum a one-semester, required administrative practicum for students in school administration under the supervision of both the education faculty and an administrator in the professional field.
4. Introduce into the curriculum Public Speaking as an elective course.

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